785 sort of compensation for the abstinence endured all through the day, /206/ and this feast sometimes lasts until morning, during which gluttony is as great as is humanly possible. When traveling, these Moslem fasts often drove me nearly to despair. During the days, the men could not be used for anything as a result of lack of sleep, and of hunger and thirst, and at night when one was exausted from the exertions of traveling there was not a moment of peace for all night long the shouting and howling and the noise of drums and all possible musical instruments never ceased. And people regard such unhealthy fasts, alternated with orgies night after night, as deeds pleasing to God.

778 776 As regards superstition, the Central Asian Moslems are second to no other religious body. The tombs and the alleged clothing and relics of their countless saints, whose claim to this rank is usually very questionable, play a great role among them. In Central Asia there are many apocryphal tombs of saints, as for example, the tombs of Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, in Mazar -i-Sharif and in Shakh-i-Mardan. There is also the monument to Alexander the Great in Margelan, the tomb of Daniel in Samarkand, and many others. We know from history that Alexander always aspired to the honor of being nominated to the ranks of the gods during his lifetime, although his ambition was never realized; instead of this, he was subsequently granted an honor on which he had not reckoned, namely, to be venerated after two thousand years as a Moslem saint and as a propagator of Islam in Central Asia. The Moslems of Turkestan have an unshakable faith in the healing powers of relics and amulets. Chips from the tombstone (1) are regarded as an infallible means against

777 [755]

1. This tombstone is chiselled from a single block of dark green nephrite, and is of incalculable value. The stone has been cut in half in the middle by an unknown hand, and superstitious Moslems and Russian collecters have broken off pieces from this broken place, as can be seen in Figure 75.

all internal illnesses, which has resulted in an extensive trade in fake particles from the tomb of Tamerlane. How Tamerlane came to have the odor of sanctity is somewhat difficult for Westerners to understand. An equally lucrative trade is carried on by the mullahs with amulets which they have made themselves, and which ostensibly contain miraculous prayer formulas and charms. Their content, however, is often similiar to the